

South Carolina's Current Developments



Home of the first soil conservation district plan...February 4, 1938

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

May/June 2005

From the Office of the
State Conservationist
Walter W. Douglas



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Dear NRCSers,

This year we celebrate 70 years of NRCS and 20 years of the Earth Team. South Carolina has proven to be a leader in the conservation of natural resources since 1935. I am proud of our history, both nationally and here in the Palmetto State. We have a reputation for excellence, especially when it comes to the work and dedication of our employees, including those who worked before us and built a solid foundation for the agency. I'm also thankful for our dedicated volunteers who have given their time and energy to the South Carolina Conservation Partnership. We couldn't have done it without them.

You should all be proud to be a part of this legacy—including our conservation partners. The protection of our natural resources is a joint effort, and it is the work of many who have protected and improved South Carolina's natural resources for the past seven decades.

A great way to celebrate our agency's history is to show the new South Carolina NRCS video production, "A Voice for the Land." The Public Affairs Staff has been working on this project for the past year and will soon distribute DVD and VHS copies of the video. This will be useful in illustrating to a wide audience what NRCS and our partners strive to accomplish and what conservation means to everybody—not just farmers. The video is suited to a variety of audiences, and I hope that you will find it useful.

**Happy Birthday NRCS and the
Earth Team!**

photo by Linda Pickering, Barnwell

Celebrating 70 Years of Conservation Excellence in South Carolina

NRCS celebrates 70 years of conservation excellence this year, and in South Carolina we are particularly proud of our accomplishments throughout the past seven decades. Take a look back at our rich history across the state. Happy Birthday NRCS!



Charleston, SC, undated photo, M.W. Sullivan, Soil Scientist, Conway, SC, teaches a Boy Scout troop about soil and its properties.



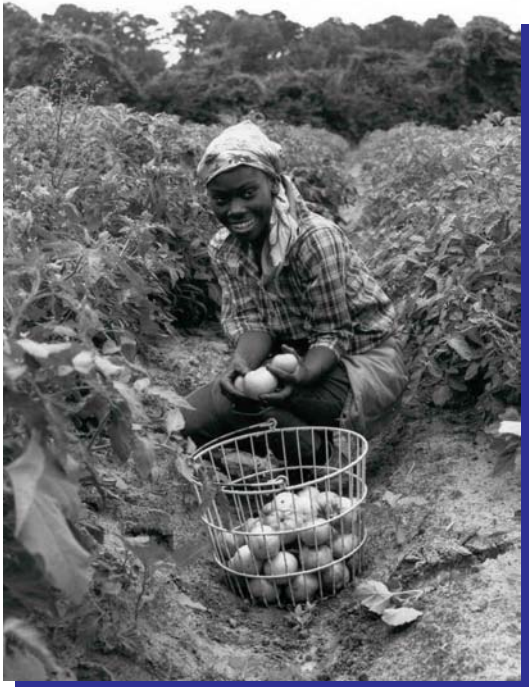
Edgefield, SC, 1952, James Edwards Simpkins sows grain on this steep land belonging to his grandfather.



Somewhere between Newberry and Whitmire, SC. The effects of erosion were pictured in the historic, undated, photo.



Berkeley County, SC, This photo was taken in 1968 in the Cross Community and shows J.S. Case (right), district conservationist, and D.M. Jones, soil conservationist, discussing a drainage project.



Beaufort-Jasper, Cherry Hill Plantation, 1967, Patricia Millidge picks green tomatoes for the farmers market.



Spartanburg, SC, 1942, on the farm of J.W. Gaston. The caption reads: "Charles P. Hammond, Spartanburg merchant, is shown weighing cotton picked by 300 Wofford College students, who volunteered to spend one day in the cotton fields to help harvest Spartanburg County's five million dollar cotton crop. The Wofford group picked approximately 15,000 pounds of cotton in one day."

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Dillon County, Maple Swamp Watershed, 1967: Area Engineer Calvin B. Derrick discusses the watershed to a tour group.



Spartanburg County, SC (Duncan), farm of J.W. Gaston, photo taken 1938. An excerpt from the picture's caption read: "An agreement was signed by Mr. Gaston with the Soil Conservation Service in the spring of 1934, at which time Mr. Gaston was rotating the cultivated crops by fields and using farmer-built terraces on the cultivated land of his farm. Mr. Gaston is well pleased with the type of rotation that is now in effect."



Spartanburg County, SC. Berry's Gully was part of the South Tyger River Soil Erosion Control Project. The original gully was 800 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 35 feet deep. Conservation work included diverting water from the sides, installation of dams made of nearby field stones, and plantings of rye grass, honey-suckle, and trees.

NRCS Chief Knight Visits Nation's First Grassland Easement in Sumter County

The nation's first Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) easement was officially dedicated by NRCS Chief Bruce Knight in Sumter County, on March 16, 2005. Knight was in the state to host a



Chief Knight discusses the Grassland Reserve Program (GRP) during the press conference.

GRP press conference at Rowland Alston's 83-acre farm. GRP is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore, and enhance grasslands on their property.

Chief Knight headlined the program, and also in attendance were South Carolina legislative representatives, USDA department officials, and local Sumter County officials and the media.

The GRP easement will be enhanced with a grassland resources conservation plan to maintain the viability of mixed grasses through common grazing practices such as rotational grazing and cross fencing.



Rowland Alston (left) and NRCS Chief Bruce Knight discuss GRP and other natural resource issues on Alston's nationally syndicated television show "Making it Grow."

USDA Announces \$6 Million for New Small-Scale/Limited Resource Farmers Initiative

At a meeting in Columbia, South Carolina, small farmers and USDA officials converged to discuss a new Small-Scale/Limited Resource Farmers Initiative.

At the meeting, NRCS Chief Bruce Knight announced that the Natural Resources Conservation Service will provide up to \$6 million to the new initiative to help small farmers implement good conservation practices on their land.

NRCS offices in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and the Caribbean Area will each dedicate up to \$500,000 in program funds for the initiative, which will help increase participation in USDA voluntary conservation programs through improved outreach efforts to limited resource farmers.

The funds will help farmers with 100 acres or less of cropland implement conservation practices. To be eligible, at least 10 percent of the cropland acres must be planted to alternative crops. Cost-share rates will be up to 90 percent for all practices and contracts will be limited to \$10,000.

The Small-Scale/Limited Resource Farmers Initiative emphasizes cost-effective, economical conservation practices for erosion control, water management and grazing land management and includes livestock watering facilities, fencing and irrigation systems. As part of this initiative, the NRCS State Office in South Carolina has appointed a Small Farmer Liaison. Wilfred Pace, former NRCS District Conservationist in Bamberg/Barnwell Counties, is the liaison.

Additional information for small farmers and ranchers is on the Web at <http://www.usda.gov/oce/smallfarm> and http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/AFSIC_pubs/altlist.htm.



NRCS Chief Knight (left) and Hezekiah Gibson, United Farmers USA President, at a United Farmers conference in Columbia, SC.

South Carolina NRCS Celebrates Wetlands Month in Orangeburg

By Sabrenna Bennett, Public Affairs Staff

"Wetlands are the link between land and water, where the flow of water, the cycling of nutrients and the energy of the sun meet to produce highly productive ecosystems."

This is just one of the many definitions describing wetlands and their importance to the environment. They provide a critical transition zone in watersheds, and are vital links between land and water. Benefits of wetlands include erosion control, nutrient retention, groundwater recharge, habitat for hundreds of species of animals and plants, prevention of pollution from surface water runoff and hunting and recreational activities.

In honor of wetlands, May was deemed National Wetlands Month in 1991 by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and their partners, as a way to educate Americans about the value of wetlands as a natural resource. NRCS celebrated the importance of wetlands on May 11, 2005, in Bowman (Orangeburg County), South Carolina. The event was held on the property of Mark Behr, a landowner enrolled in the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and one of six landowners involved in the Four Holes Swamp Special Initiative WRP Project. This initiative involves six permanent, adjoining easements that will restore over 6,000 acres of wetlands.

The event featured comments from local, state and national officials, including Frank Stephens, Orangeburg NRCS District Conservationist, Walter W. Douglas, South Carolina NRCS State Conservationist, and Courtenay McCormick, Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Conservation in Washington, DC. Local landowners, media representatives and NRCS agency partners were also present. During the program, officials discussed several topics, including wetland restoration from a state and national



Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Conservation Courtenay McCormick addressed attendees.

perspective, Four Holes Wetland Restoration, and WRP, a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resources concerns on private lands.

"We chose the Four Holes Swamp project area as the site for our celebration be-

cause it is one of the largest areas in the state where adjacent wetlands will be restored back to their original hydrology," explained Douglas. The area is part of the Four Holes Swamp, a 450,000 acre area that flows 62 miles through four counties, before it joins the Edisto River and the Atlantic Ocean.

The Four Holes Swamp Special Initiative WRP Project is not only important because it will restore several thousand acres of wetlands, but also because the overall goal of this initiative is to restore the natural hydrology of the land by removing blockages, such as roads and culverts, that prevent the natural flow of water through the floodplain.

Over the last century, logging operations in the area installed roads through the wetlands that disturbed the natural flow of the water, negatively affecting the habitat and possibly causing certain areas to become completely dry. By converting the area back to its original hydrology, the migration of

fish and other aquatic species will be facilitated and the delivery of food sources downstream will resume, benefiting many animal and plant species.

"These willing landowners have entered into a conservation easement with our agency that will protect these wetlands forever," explained Stephens. "While it may take a couple of decades to restore itself, we are taking the necessary steps to ensure that these wetlands will thrive to benefit future generations."



Mark Behr, WRP landowner in the Four Holes Swamp, thanked local NRCS staff for their assistance in enrolling over 500 acres of his land into WRP.



This wetland acreage in the Four Holes Swamp is part of the more than 6,000 acres that will be restored through WRP.

South Carolina's State Soil to be Featured at Smithsonian Institute

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Smithsonian Institution developed a soils display at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC. The display features a soil monolith and introduces visitors to an expanded soils exhibit still being developed. USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Soil Scientist Ben Stuckey said, "We hope that next year the exhibit will highlight Bohicket, the official state soil of South Carolina." The Soil Science Society of South Carolina is working to secure local funding for the inclusion of South Carolina's state soil.

This first-of-its-kind exhibit will help educate millions of children and adults annually about the nation's soil resources and their economic value to a productive and vibrant society.

"This exhibit is the foundation for various other soil and natural resource related themes the Smithsonian will feature this year and beyond," Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns said. "The information in this exhibit demonstrates the impact of wise management decisions on cropland, range and pasture, forestland, gardens and homesites."

USDA-NRCS soil scientists and others have been working with Smithsonian exhibit designers on a permanent display of soil monoliths, which are soil profiles mounted and preserved on boards. "This exhibition of soils showcases the important and vital role soil plays in sustaining our society," explained Stuckey. "The soil monoliths will help the public to better understand how closely linked we are to the soil and how it is a key component to our survival."

The display of all 50 state soil monoliths will become part of a larger interactive exhibit with hands-on activities and demonstrations. The exhibit will include an underground view of the hidden world of soil. The completed soils exhibit is scheduled to open in July 2006 in conjunction with the World Congress of Soil Science that will convene in Philadelphia.

For more information on the soils exhibit or how you can support the state soil exhibit, visit <http://www.soils.org/smithsonian>, or call (843) 549-1821, ext. 113.

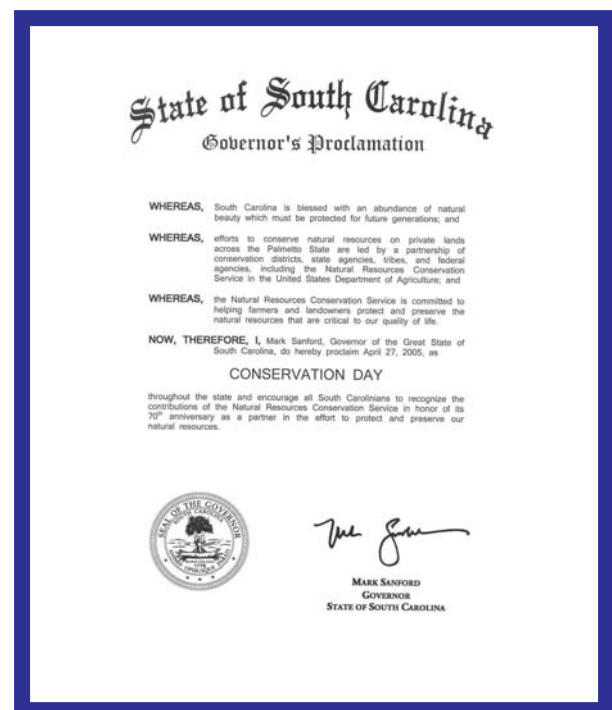
Governor Sanford Proclaims April 27th "Conservation Day"

In celebration of the 70th anniversary of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), an official proclamation was signed by SC's governor Mark Sanford declaring April 27, *South Carolina Conservation Day*."

NRCS was created as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) within USDA on April 27, 1935, in response to the devastation of the Dust Bowl days. The agency's primary mission then was to conserve soil on agricultural land.

SCS became NRCS in 1994 to better reflect its expanded role of helping to protect natural resources such as water, air, plants and animals on private and tribal lands. Through NRCS conservation practices and methods, landowners and farmers in South Carolina have improved the land and the quality of life.

NRCS appreciates the many landowners, employees, and partners-- all whom have played a vital role in helping the agency accomplish its mission over the past 70 years. The anniversary will be celebrated throughout 2005.



Snelgrove Honored with *Order of the Silver Crescent*

Governor Mark Sanford awarded Von P. Snelgrove, Chief of Conservation Districts, SC Department of Natural Resources (DNR), with the distinguished honor of "Order of the Silver Crescent" – the state's highest honor for volunteer and community service. The award was presented on Wednesday, April 20, 2005, during a one-day Leadership Training for Soil and Water Conservation District Commissioners, hosted by DNR.



SCDNR Chief of Conservation Districts Von Snelgrove (left) received the "Order of the Silver Crescent" from SCDNR Land, Water, and Conservation Division Advisory Committee Co-Chair William Simpson (standing in for Governor Sanford.)

For more than three decades, Mr. Snelgrove has been an outstanding public servant. Throughout his distinguished career with DNR, Snelgrove has demonstrated the highest standards of professionalism and maintained a clear focus on agricultural and natural resource conservation and management, and their important impact on the state.

USDA Service Center Opens in York County

A Grand Opening ceremony was held on March 21, 2005, for the newly built USDA Service Center in York County. The 3,000 square foot building offers farmers and landowners services from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

In attendance at the ceremony were several local, county and state officials, including Hugh Weathers, *Commissioner of Agriculture*, Ken Rentiers, *State Executive Director of FSA*, Ronnie Feaster, *NRCS State Resource Conservationist*, Soil and Water Conservation District Board members, FSA County Committee members, and John George of the Catawba Indians.

"This new service center will enable NRCS and FSA to better serve their customers," stated Maryann Trent, NRCS District Conservationist in York.



left to right: Ronnie Feaster, NRCS state resource conservationist, John George of the Catawba Indian Nation, and Ken Rentiers, state executive director of FSA, attended the York USDA Service Center dedication.



Local, state, and county officials toured the new York USDA Service Center.

Thurmond High FFA Team Wins 2005 South Carolina Envirothon

The 2005 South Carolina Envirothon was held May 6, 2005, at the Sandhills Research and Education Center. Nineteen high school teams from across the state competed on several environmental subjects, such as aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and urban conservation. The winning teams were awarded college scholarships. First place winners Thurmond High FFA will travel to Springfield, Missouri, July 18-24, 2005, for the national competition.

1st place: Thurmond FFA, Edgefield County

2nd place: Calhoun Falls DNR Team - Calhoun Falls, SC

3rd place: Spartanburg Team A, Spartanburg, SC

Honorable Mention Award - James Island Christian, Charleston, SC



Students worked in teams and also delivered oral presentations before a panel of judges.



Thurmond High School Future Farmers of America (FFA)-- winners of the 2005 South Carolina Envirothon, pictured with Envirothon Coordinator Joy Boswell (far left), SCDNR.

NRCS Urban Conservationist Improves Road Conditions at Fort Jackson

"Excessive runoff and steep slopes cause erosion on road surfaces," explained NRCS Urban Conservationist Jim Wilson. "This can be a real safety concern."

NRCS and Fort Jackson have teamed up to improve training access roads and reduce erosion and maintenance problems.

Project participants include James Williams, NRCS assistant state conservationist for operations, Ricky Walker, NRCS civil engineering technician and Hugh Caldwell, Richland SWCD manager.

With an expanded need for training lands, Fort Jackson continues to be a leader in conservation among all defense installations.



Conservation work at Fort Jackson improves roads through the use of erosion fabric, drainage swales, vegetation and surface treatment.



pictured left to right: During a recent site visit to Fort Jackson, Ricky Walker (far left) explains the installed conservation practices to Hugh Caldwell (middle) and James Williams.

Retiring NRCS Wildlife Biologist Leads Last Plant ID Session

Since 1998, NRCS State Wildlife Biologist Jim Lewis has been sharing his extensive knowledge about plants, trees, and shrubs. Lewis is right at home in the middle of a forest, and knows the common and scientific name of every specimen of plant life.

Throughout the years, participants on the tour have challenged each other to find items that he can't name, but that's been difficult. Lewis knows his stuff and loves sharing his expertise with others. "I think it's important for our employees to be familiar with the plant life in their region of the state. They need to be comfortable identifying plants and trees for conservation planning, and for wetland restoration," he explained. Lewis does not know exactly how many people he has led on tours over the past eight years, but it has been hundreds, and they include not only NRCS personnel, but many conservation partners. "I've trained employees from US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Natural Resources, US Forest Service, Forestry Commission, Clemson Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District employees, the Army of Corps of Engineers, as well as personnel from Fort Jackson, McEntire, and also private consultants."



Double Trouble: Ben Stuckey, NRCS state soil scientist (left) and Jim Lewis take a short break during the plant identification tour.

Lewis has worked over the years with Conservation Agronomist Gene Hardee (and other conservationists) to split up the groups. Lewis leads the group for identification of trees and shrubs and Hardee points out grasses and legumes. Lewis led his last tours the week of May 16th to two groups in different regions of the state. Both tours were completely filled to capacity, as many realized that this would be the last time that Lewis would lead. But, don't worry. Lewis imparted his knowledge to others, so that the tours can continue. Horry NRCS Soil Conservationist

Shaun Worley, Jasper/Beaufort NRCS District Conservationist Chris Graves and Orangeburg Wildlife Biologist Sudie Daves will carry on the tradition. Lewis trained them and they led their first tour on May 19. Lewis remarked, "They did an excellent job, and I am very confident that they will be excellent trainers and that the plant identification tours will continue."

Lewis retires June 3, 2005, after 33 years of service to NRCS.



A group enjoys the last Jim Lewis-led plant identification tour in South Carolina.

SC NRCSer Receives 2005 Federal Women's Program Manager Award

Ayana Brown received the NRCS 2005 Outstanding Federal Women's Program Manager Award. This is a national award given to Federal Women's Program Managers (FWPM) once a year who exemplify excellence in promoting information and issues related to women.

Nominees considered for the award are ranked according to a list of criteria, which include: *Impact on NRCS; Self Development; Involvement in Women's Issues; Support and Impact on Other Women; and Role Model Qualities.*

Brown serves as the Regional FWPM Co-Chair for the East, as well as the National Awards Committee Chair. She is also active in the community, participating in events related to women's issues, such as the Red Dress Campaign (spreading awareness about heart disease in women) and the Walk for Life, (to spread awareness about breast cancer).

Congratulations Ayana!



Ayana Brown is the 2005 Outstanding Federal Women's Program Manager.

SC NRCS Welcomes Two New Employees



Curtis Hall is the new field operations administrative assistant in the state office. Originally from Portsmouth, VA, Curtis retired from active duty (US Army) in December 2000 after completing over 21 years of active service. Curtis has a

bachelor's degree in business management from National-Louis University, Chicago, IL. Before signing on with NRCS Curtis was employed by Booz-Allen & Hamilton, a defense contractor headquartered in the Washington, DC metro area and the U.S. Army V Corps (G4) in Heidelberg, Germany. He enjoys cooking, working out, racquetball and traveling. He looks forward to working with NRCS, providing them with professional, courteous service.

Sudie Daves is the new wildlife biologist in Orangeburg County. She comes to South Carolina NRCS from Mecklenburg County, NC, where she worked as a Conservation Science Specialist for the Mecklenburg County Division of Natural Resources. In that capacity, she performed biodiversity assessments of natural areas, conducted wildlife inventories, monitored rare and listed plant populations, wrote management plans, participated in habitat management on nature preserves, and was involved with Piedmont Prairie restoration efforts. She has also worked on the coast for the NC Wildlife Resources Commission as a Waterbird Biologist, and with Tall Timbers Research Station, Inc., as the Project Manager for a season-of-fire study in the Sandhills of NC. She holds a



Master's Degree in Wildlife Biology from California University of Pennsylvania, where she completed a 2-year research project involving grassland birds and farmland habitat restoration. She is originally from Conway, SC.

NRCS Engineer Presented with SWCS Award

NRCS Greenville Field Engineer Eddie Martin was presented with the SC Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) Conservation Technical Award. Martin accepted the award during a surprise presentation at the NRCS State Office at an Engineer's Planning Meeting. SC SWCS Vice President Amy O. Maxwell made the presentation.

The award is given to outstanding SWCS members or non-members for exemplary conservation assistance to landusers over a sustained period of time (3-5 years). Martin was recognized for his innovative assistance and dedicated work ethic.



Greenville Field Engineer Eddie Martin was presented with the SC Soil and Water Conservation Society Technical Award.

SC NRCS Welcomes Summer 2005 Interns

On May 17, 2005, NRCS welcomed five summer student interns on board. These students are either enrolled in college or have recently graduated, and are working toward full-time employment with NRCS through the agency's student/career-conditional programs.



*Darla Simons
Student Trainee Soil
Conservationist
Aiken, SC*



*Christina Lucia
Student Trainee Soil
Conservationist
Walhalla, SC*



*Lee Youmans III
Career Intern Engineer
Walterboro, SC*



*Vincent Nicholson
Student Trainee Soil
Conservationist
Marion, SC*



*Daniel Griffin
Career Intern Soil Conservation
Technician
Chesterfield, SC*



The 2005 NRCS student interns pictured with NRCS South Carolina State Conservationist Walt Douglas.



Conservation Photo Contest Winners



First Place: by Linda Pickering, Barnwell County Administrative Assistant: Steve Meadows' farm near Blackville, S.C.



Second Place: by Amanda Bauknight, Pickens SWCD Chairman, "Good Mornin' Pickens!"



Third Place: by Chris Graves, Jasper County District Conservationist, "Live Oak," Ridgeland, SC.

Submit your best photos to
sabrenna.bennett@sc.usda.gov

PERSONNEL NEWS

NEW EMPLOYEES

Curtis Hall, GS-07, was selected as the Field Operations Administrative Assistant in the State Office effective May 2, 2005.

Daniel Griffin, GS-05, was selected as a Career Intern, Soil Conservation Technician in Chesterfield effective May 15, 2005

Lawrence Youmans III, GS-05, was selected as a Career Intern, Civil Engineer Technician in Walterboro effective May 15, 2005.

Sudie Daves, GS-0486-09, was selected as the Wildlife Biologist for Orangeburg, effective May 15, 2005.

PROMOTIONS

Eric Fleming, a Civil Engineer in the State Office, was promoted to Supervisory Civil Engineer GS-0810-13, and reassigned to Utah

Caleb Gulley, a Soil Scientist in Bishopville, was promoted to GS-0470-07, effective April 3, 2005

George Sullivan, a Career Intern, GIS Specialist at the State Office, was promoted to GS-0150-11, effective April 3, 2005

Matthew Anderson, a Soil Conservationist was promoted to District Conservationist, GS-0457-11, in Manning, effective May 15, 2005.

Michael Hall, a Grazing Land Specialist, was promoted to Natural Resources Specialist, GS-0401-13, in North Carolina, effective March 6, 2005.

Mike Lott, a Soil Conservationist, was temporarily promoted to District Conservationist, GS-0457-12, in Bamberg, effective May 15, 2005.

Kellee Melton, a Soil Conservationist, was promoted to State Technology Coordinator, GS-0457-11, in Columbia, effective May 15, 2005.

STUDENTS

Christina Lucia, GS-02, was selected as a Student for the Walhalla Field Office, effective May 15, 2005

Vincent Nicholson, GS-04, was selected as a Student for the Marion Field Office, effective May 15, 2005

Darla Simons, GS-02, was selected as a Student for the Aiken Field Office, effective May 15, 2005

RETIREMENT

Dennis Bauknight, District Conservationist in Greenville, retired effective March 3, 2005.

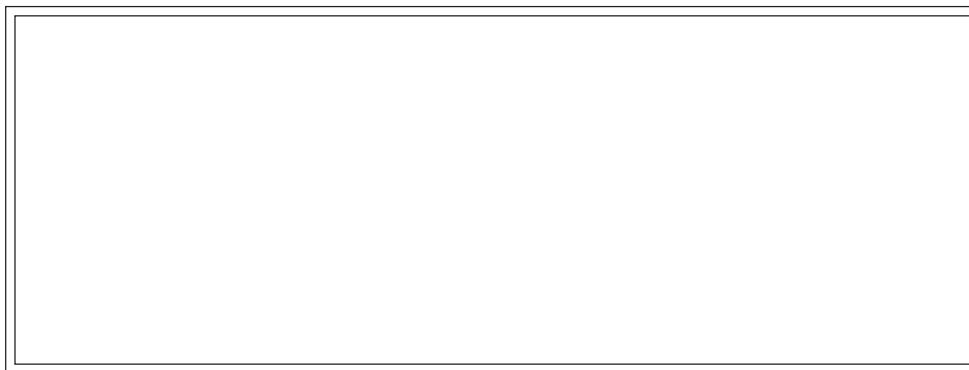
Frank Roe, Soil Conservationist Technician in Aiken, retired effective March 31, 2005.

Fred Plyler, Soil Conservationist Technician in Chesterfield, retired effective March 3, 2005.

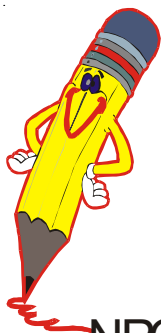
REASSIGNMENT

Shawnn Balstad was reassigned as a District Conservationist, in North Dakota, effective April 3, 2005.

Wilfred Pace was temporarily assigned as the Small Farmer Liaison in the State Office, effective March 6, 2005.



FIRST CLASS
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